

Mid-Nineteenth Century New England Women in Evangelical Foreign Missions: Seraphina Haynes Everett, A Missionary Wife in The Ottoman Mission Field

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Abstract

This article illustrates American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions' support of the "missionary matrimony", mid-nineteenth-century New England women's perceptions of the missionary career obtained through matrimony, and their impressions of the Oriental mission fields and non-Christian or non-Protestant women, who were depicted as victims to be saved. A brief introduction to New England women's involvement in foreign missions will continue with the driving force that led these women to leave the United States for far mission fields in the second part of the paper. This context will be exemplified with the story of a New England missionary wife. The analysis consists of the journal entries and letters of Seraphina Haynes Everett of Ottoman mission field. The writings of this woman from New England give detailed information about the spiritual voyage she was taking in the mid-nineteenth century Ottoman lands. In her letters to the United States, Everett described two Ottoman cities, Izmir (Smyrna) and Istanbul (Constantinople), and wrote about her impressions of Islam and Christianity as practiced in the Ottoman empire. Everett's opinions of the Ottoman empire, which encouraged more American women to devote themselves to the education and to the evangelization of Armenian women of the Ottoman empire in the middle of the nineteenth century, conclude the paper.

Keywords

New England Missionary Wives in Foreign Mission Fields – Seraphina Haynes Everett – Oriental Women – New England Women's Self-Image Through Mission Works – American Evangelicals in Ottoman Empire

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The Universe might be enlightened, improved and harmonized by woman; she would be another better Eve, working in cooperation with the Redeemer, bringing the world back from its revolt and sin.¹

—BARBARA WELTER

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New England women's involvement in the foreign mission movement in the United States began in church and in Cent Societies at the beginning of the nineteenth century, in the 1810s. The meaning of piety and Evangelical Protestantism led New England women to pray for assigned male missionaries, and to contribute to their education, clothing and any other expenses with their limited kitchen budgets. In time, these pious women, active in church prayer and meetings regarding foreign mission works, met newly assigned missionaries, married them, and left their families for 'heathen lands' to spread the Gospel. The institution of marriage came to expand and change the foreign mission movement, which was noticeably enriched by female participants in the following decades.

Missionary matrimony carried two dimensions. American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions supported it for the development of the missionary works. In other words, the Board wanted the assigned male missionary to be happy and comfortable in his home with his wife and children, so that he could do his evangelical work better. The second dimension of the Board's dedicated support of the missionary matrimony was based on females having undisturbed access to the family lives of the locals in the mission fields. The wives of the missionaries, while creating the quintessential domestic environment for their assigned missionary husbands to work more efficiently, also enlarged the Board's mission circle by spreading the Gospel among the local women and their children.

New England missionary wives served as bridges between the local women of the mission field and the Board's male missionaries. They learned the local language, and became translators and evangelizers. With the intensification of the education in evangelical missions, they became teachers or even mothers

1 Welter, Barbara, "Cult of true womanhood, 1820–1860", in *Major Problems in American Women's History*, ed. Mary Beth Norton (Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company, 1989), p. 122.

for the orphans in the mission fields. Numerous examples of exotic disease, childbirth, widowhood and early death formed the history of New England missionary wives. Most of them dedicated their whole lives to the Evangelical cause, were unable to return to the United States, and worked relentlessly in the “heathen lands” to save their “heathen sisters”. While doing this, as their writings demonstrated, their benchmark was their very self-image. The pious, quite, educated, cheerful Protestant female dedicated to the evangelization of all women in the world constituted this self-image contrasted with the illiterate, lazy and submissive ‘heathen’ women. This article argues that the missionary matrimony which the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (A.B.C.F.M.) supported in the nineteenth century produced beneficial results for the development of the Board’s evangelical missions. Both the domestic and the vocational responsibility the Board assigned to the missionary wives through missionary matrimony increased the number of the converted locals in the mission fields, softened the process of the acceptance of American missionaries by the local people, elevated the idea of education as a means to reach evangelization among the Board members, and strengthened the support of New England women back in the United States. Seraphina Haynes Everett, the wife of A.B.C.F.M. missionary Joel Sumner Everett, is representative of these missionary wives. Seraphina undertook a spiritual voyage nurtured with missionary zeal in 1845 when she traveled to the Ottoman empire, the “land of darkness and ignorance”.² While she supported her husband by offering him a warm home with six children, she worked among Armenian women and children to spread the Gospel. Her spiritual voyage turned out to be productive for she gained an influential position in foreign mission works among Armenians in Istanbul, and described herself as “Eve, who was cooperating with the redeemer”.³ Through Seraphina’s story, this article asserts that missionary wives acted as assigned missionaries in the mission fields, and effectively served the evangelical cause of A.B.C.F.M.

The Existence of the “American Female” in the American Foreign Mission Movement in the Nineteenth Century

Derived from the Second Great Awakening, which was in force during the period 1790 to 1840, New England Protestant Christians started evangelistic foreign

2 Wheeler, Benjamin, Mary Gladding, *The Missionary Sisters: A Memorial of Mrs. Seraphina Haynes Everett, and Mrs. Harriet Martha Hamlin, Late Missionaries of the A.B.C.F.M. at Constantinople* (Boston: American Tract Society, 1860), p. 52.

3 Welter, “Cult of true womanhood, 1820–1860”, p. 122.

missions at the end of the eighteenth century in the United States. Their intention, which they ardently supported, was the evangelization and conversion of the so called “heathen people” from all around the world. One of the most popular Protestant mission organizations which arose in the United States was the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, established in 1810 in Massachusetts by Congregationalists. The authorization of the Board occurred on 20 June 1812, and the Board immediately began its foreign missions in India. In 1820, Pliny Fisk and Levi Parsons, two members of the Board, arrived in Izmir with a research group, and conducted wide ranging research on Anatolia and the Ottoman empire mission fields. Fisk and Parsons were commissioned to “study the languages of the region, visit the historic seven churches of Asia, gather information about the region, not offend laws and customs, survey the new field in the Ottoman Empire and keep communication with Boston”.⁴ This detailed analysis of the culture, language, traditions and religion of the Ottomans encouraged the Board to start evangelical work in the Ottoman empire, and the first missionary of the A.B.C.F.M., Reverend William Goodell, arrived in Istanbul in 1831 as an official A.B.C.F.M. missionary.⁵ Until the early 1830s, A.B.C.F.M. conducted missionary activities among Jews and Muslims in the Ottoman empire, but failure to convert these groups to Protestant Christianity, and problems with the Ottoman administration caused by their activities among Jews and Muslims, had led A.B.C.F.M. to “shift its focus to different sects in the region, including Greeks in Izmir and in Greece, as well as Armenians in Istanbul and in Anatolia”.⁶ The mission’s expansion to cover the Armenians under Ottoman rule had actually been considered earlier. A.B.C.F.M. missionaries to Beirut, Pliny Fisk, Isaac Bird, and William Goodell, wrote to Boston in 1824 “to recommend the extension of the printing activities”, which were stationed originally in Malta in 1822, “particularly for the Armenians”.⁷

The involvement of New England women in the formation of this evangelical foreign mission endeavour developed almost instantly. Original sin, one of the structural beliefs within evangelical theology was what caused New England women’s interest in the evangelical missions, and prompted their instant

4 Doğan, Mehmet Ali, “From New England into new lands: the beginning of a long story”, in *American Missionaries and the Middle East: Foundational Encounters*, ed. Mehmet Ali Doğan and Heather J. Sharkey (Utah: University of Utah Press, 2011), p. 13.

5 Strong, William Ellsworth, *The Story of the American Board: The Centenary of American Foreign Missions* (Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1910); Phillips, Clifton J., *Protestant America and the Pagan World: The First Half-Century of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, 1810–1860* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969).

6 Doğan, “From New England into new lands: the beginning of a long story”, p. 19.

7 Doğan, “From New England into new lands: the beginning of a long story”, p. 19.

participation in the movement. Since each child in New England's churches was taught, "original sin tainted everyone", all of them, boy or girl, grew up considering that they were sinners.⁸ New England women's self-image may actually have benefited from this knowledge, since the idea of being a sinner did not depend on gender difference, so women depicted themselves as no worse than men. To express the Gospel meant to announce that Jesus had come to save the world, more particularly the individual sinner, from sin. Missionary activity was the logical consequence of the belief: if one believed that "human-kind was sinful, Jesus Christ died to save the world from sin, and humankind was destined for eternal punishment unless each believed in Christ", then it became imperative for believers to explain the Gospel to unbelievers.⁹ This was the constitutional root of New England women's involvement in the mission endeavours.

In the nineteenth century, church and religion was never neglected in the lives of educated New England girls. Especially after conversion, they gained more courage since the idea of being safe from sin helped them to survive under any circumstances. Continuing to attend the church service made these girls aware of the conditions of non-Christian women in heathen lands. Horrified by the spiritual darkness of these women, New England girls devoted themselves to the evangelical cause, and established female missionary societies under the supervision of local churches.

As Marjorie Shell Wilser argues, girls raised in New England had, by virtue of their background, an ingrained sense of individualism. New England schools and churches all gave them a sense that America, especially New England, had a mission to provide the world with a "godly example of democracy". Combined with the "equally ingrained sense of the mission of the church to spread the Gospel", this sense of mission was a strong motivating factor for the faithful of New England.¹⁰

Initially, female missionary societies were operating as "Cent Societies" under the name of denominational boards.¹¹ These Cent Societies contributed to the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, and after the 1810s they began to contribute to the Baptist and to the United Foreign Missionary

8 Wilser, Marjorie Shell, "Living Sacrifices: Women Missionaries' Personal Writings 1812–1860", Masters Dissertation, San Jose State University, 1997, p. 42.

9 Wilser, "Living Sacrifices: Women Missionaries' Personal Writings 1812–1860", p. 49.

10 Wilser, "Living Sacrifices: Women Missionaries' Personal Writings 1812–1860", p. 40.

11 Bendroth, Margaret Lamberts, "The Social Dimensions of Woman's Sphere: The Rise of Women's Organizations in Late Nineteenth-Century American Protestantism", Ph.D. Dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 1984, p. 87.

Societies. The annual reports of these small organizations emphasized how popular these city missions were among New England women, who wanted to support the foreign mission movement. The number of their members increased everyday, and cents collected from each member made up huge amounts of cash for the “parent” societies, which was the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.¹²

The pioneer of female fund raising organizations was The Boston Female Society for Missionary Purposes, founded in 1800, which aimed to help the American Board of Commissioners financially. The first secretary and treasurer of this pioneer organization was a single lady, Miss Mary Webb, who managed to reach all women organizations in the United States.¹³ Although women mostly were not wage-earners in the 1810s, their devotion to evangelizing the world led them to donate the money they saved from their kitchen budgets which they obtained from their husbands. The other similar example was the New York Female Missionary Society, which started functioning as a fund raiser for the Methodist Board of Foreign Missions in 1819. Traditionally, during the pre-Civil War period, the female missionary movement was under the shadow of missionary men's large denominational boards. Women, who devoted themselves to the mission evangelization embracing the whole world, were to gather in women's meetings and welcome donations from the participants of such meetings in the name of evangelization.

The image of an active female participation in missionary programmes, meetings, and funding, did not seem inappropriate in New England society, which believed in the true meaning of Victorian womanhood,¹⁴ in fact these

12 Bendroth, “The Social Dimensions of Woman's Sphere: The Rise of Women's Organizations in Late Nineteenth-Century American Protestantism”, p. 88.

13 Montgomery, Helen Barret, *Western Women in Eastern Lands: An Outline Study of Fifty Years of Woman's Work in Foreign Missions* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1910), p. 12.

14 Victorian Womanhood is the concept women's historians use to define the lifestyle of the women in the nineteenth century were taught to embrace. According to this concept, the women of the nineteenth and early twentieth century in the Anglo-American world belonged to the domestic sphere of social life. Inside the borders of this sphere, Victorian women built a peaceful and warm home for their husbands and children, took good care of the households and attended church meetings so that they would become more pious and respectable. Domesticity, motherhood, family and finally religion were the leading characteristics of Victorian Womanhood. See Smith-Rosenberg, Carroll, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985); Cott, Nancy F., *The Bonds of Womanhood: Woman's Sphere in New England, 1780–1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Welter, Barbara, *Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the*

pious women were considered the ideal type of women in American society within the confines of Victorian womanhood. Missionary men appreciated their efforts in fund-raising, and step by step encouraged them to support missionary causes, which, however, should be implemented by missionary men only.¹⁵ Thus, New England women were to bring piety to the missionary meetings, they were to pray with clergymen and to become models for all women who sought a career. From the 1810s until 1868, the woman's mission movement even witnessed the expansion of the "missionary zeal" as one of the basic courses in the curriculum of female academies.¹⁶

With encouragement from the ministers, New England women gathering at churches began widening their perspectives in the early nineteenth century; they learned the Bible in depth, exchanged their personal thoughts regarding missionary works in far lands, and heard about pious women, who died for the sake of the Gospel, and debated on them. Considering the new perspective these churchwomen were gaining, church gatherings ignited these women's "fresh interest in missions".¹⁷ From this point on, New England women became interested in obtaining a more active role in missionary works. Pious women's growing interest in missionary works became the roots of their attempts firstly to organise their societies more efficiently, and secondly to become involved in the missionary vocation by marrying A.B.C.F.M.'s assigned missionaries.

Eventually the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions acknowledged the extent of female activity both at home, and in the mission field. The advice of the London Missionary Society on the contribution of females in missionary fields led the Prudential Committee of A.B.C.F.M. to decide on sending educated New England women – wives of A.B.C.F.M. missionaries – to foreign mission fields. The British example in the India mission field showed that women "were indispensable to the success of the work" since they conducted schools, and educated 'Oriental' girls in religious knowledge. The Prudential Committee presented this fact as the initial point when it decided to send three women with their appointed missionary husbands to Ceylon in 1815.

Nineteenth Century (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1976); Lerner, Gerda, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

- 15 Beaver, Robert Pierce, *All Loves Excelling: American Protestant Women in World Mission* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), p. 34.
- 16 Bendroth, "The Social Dimensions of Woman's Sphere: The Rise of Women's Organizations in Late Nineteenth-Century American Protestantism", p. 89.
- 17 Wilser, "Living Sacrifices: Women Missionaries' Personal Writings 1812–1860", p. 51.

Not transgressing the already defined and accepted boundaries of Victorian Womanhood, New England women inscribed a new notion of domesticity into A.B.C.F.M.'s mission endeavours. Within the secure Victorian Womanhood territory, New England women ignited the fulfilment of their crucial role as domestic workers in the mission fields. Their ambitions to marry a missionary nurtured a new business in missionary societies, which was an arranged marriage to an "appointed missionary".¹⁸ As Patricia Grimshaw puts it, New England women's "presence in foreign mission service was part of a separate female ambition for an important and independent career: the entry for which was marriage to a departing male missionary".¹⁹ In such a frame of mind, young women, who were interested in foreign missions, would hear of an ordained young minister assigned to a distant mission. In this case, older women or men of the church brought this young man to her door, and introduced him to her in the name of a mutual interest in mission vocation. The actual object of their introduction was matrimony. The young woman knew that the minister had no time to waste when he proposed to her. She interpreted these circumstances as "the hand of God" directing her path, and leading her to a more useful task by turning her into a participant in the missionary service,²⁰ and she would accept the proposal wholeheartedly.

Marriage to a missionary was not an unexpected decision for the active churchwomen of New England, who religiously took part in charitable organizations. A New Englander, church going, pious woman's reason to marry a missionary was, as claimed by missionary historians, the hope that "the mission field would permit even a larger role in the salvation of others than did women's benevolent work in New England".²¹ Some women "felt limited by their inability to preach the gospel or to work publicly for the salvation of others", and marrying an assigned missionary represented a step beyond the limitations imposed upon them by society because of their sex.²²

The concept of missionary matrimony which the American Board idealized mainly consisted of three basic principles. Firstly, marriage was thought to be helpful in allowing an American Board missionary to lead an undisturbed

18 Welter, "Cult of true womanhood, 1820–1860", p. 122.

19 Grimshaw, Patricia, *Paths of Duty: American Missionary Wives in Nineteenth-Century Hawaii* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989), p. xxi.

20 Wilser, "Living Sacrifices: Women Missionaries' Personal Writings 1812–1860", p. 46.

21 Robert, Dana Lee, *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice: The Modern Mission Era 1792–1992, An Appraisal* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1997), p. 14.

22 Robert, *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice*, p. 14.

and peaceful life, with a loving and caring wife, so that he could accomplish his work. Secondly, for the success of his evangelical work, as claimed by the Board, matrimony had a very significant role: marriage to a well-educated and pious female served as a model for the non-Christian people. And finally, marriage meant the increase of missionary population in foreign lands. The American Board advocated missionary marriage on the basis that raising a Christian population in mission lands would ease the spread of evangelism.

Supporting the decision of the Board fully, the missionaries thought that "a wife seemed desirable to ward off loneliness, as well as to take over household tasks" so that they would be more active and motivated in their mission work.²³ As expected, the wives of the missionaries committed themselves to the role of "helpmate" of their husbands so as to fulfil the requirements of their husbands of marriage.²⁴ They provided a clean and peaceful home, and brought up Christian children, whose education was also carried out by them. New England women's mission objectives were mainly religiosity and domesticity.

Missionary wives were acknowledged for tireless labour and heroic self-sacrifice. A missionary in South Africa, Mr. Aldin Grout, in a letter dated 28 February 1836, referred to Mrs. Wood, who was the wife of a missionary, as a woman who "used to travel about among the blacks and whites without the least apparent thought of danger" when asking the American Board about his decision to hire Mrs. Wood as a teacher for the indigenous people.²⁵ "Sacrifice and self-denial" were key components of missionary womanhood in the early nineteenth century.

Missionary wives were the women who aimed to perform housework as well as possible so that they could be good examples for the indigenous women. In her journal dated 10 January 1847, Mrs. Emily Judson, who was a missionary wife in Burma, wife of Adoniram Judson, one of the first A.B.C.F.M. missionaries assigned to the India mission in the early 1810s,²⁶ mentioned that "women were made for such things" and limited the work of a missionary woman to domestic bondage.²⁷ The other significant responsibility of these women was evangelizing indigenous women through women's meetings held in the private

23 Robert, *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice*, p. 31.

24 Robert, *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice*, p. 32.

25 Kotze, D.J., *Letters of The American Missionaries 1835–1838* (Cape Town: The Van Riebeeck Society, 1950), p. 103.

26 Doğan, "From New England into new lands: the beginning of a long story", p. 19.

27 Kendrick, A.C., *The Life and Letters of Mrs. Emily C. Judson* (New York: Sheldon and Company, 1862), p. 247.

sphere.²⁸ In some cases, however, based on the missionary husbands' decision, missionary wives could accompany their husbands to spread Christianity. In a letter dated 1834 to one of her friends in the U.S., Mrs. Allen, who was a missionary wife in the eastern part of Anatolia, mentioned that she left her children at home with another missionary and "spent sixteen days, traveling seventy-five miles on horseback, visiting thirteen villages and holding thirty four meetings".²⁹ However, this case could be interpreted as extraordinary for missionary wives, since as a missionary in eastern Anatolia, Rev. C.H. Wheeler asserted, bringing Christianity to the places "where the light of the gospel had not entered would be too hard work for ladies" and he did not let wives accompany their husbands in visiting villages.³⁰

The subordinate and self-denying role of missionary wives spread as a new career for women who had been shaped inside the boundaries of domesticity. In a letter to her sister Susan, dated 16 March 1844, the missionary wife Mrs. Shuck mentioned her daily duties "of a private and domestic nature" as a list consisting of teaching English and Bible to Chinese ladies, attending to "the instructions of the girls in needle-work, visiting women at their homes to pray with the sick amongst them and distributing Bible".³¹

In time, direct mission work also reached these "quiet, docile, young women for whom self-denial and self-sacrifice were joyful burdens."³² While representing the ideal Protestant women, missionary wives visited the native women's homes, talked about evangelicalism, and welcomed these women to their own houses. And then, with the establishment of missionary seminaries and schools founded in the mission fields, missionary wives started their career of teaching, partly because missionary men faced restrictions in reaching the native women. The wives could have access to these private female domains, and this fact alone became the most significant reason of the American Boards' support of females in mission lands. Missionary matrimony was elevated to such a state that it grew to be a "part of God's very scheme for the evangelization of the world in the opinion of the directors of the mission boards".³³

28 Bendroth, "The Social Dimensions of Woman's Sphere: The Rise of Women's Organizations in Late Nineteenth-Century American Protestantism", p. 93.

29 Wheeler, Rev. C.H., *Letters from Eden; Reminiscences of Missionary Life in the East* (Massachusetts: American Tract Society, 1868), p. 207.

30 Wheeler, *Letters From Eden; Reminiscences of Missionary Life in the East*, p. 201.

31 Jeter, Jeremiah Bell, *Memoir of Mrs. Henrietta Shuck: The First American Female Missionary to China* (Richmond, 1850), p. 201.

32 Wilser, "Living Sacrifices: Women Missionaries' Personal Writings 1812–1860", p. 72.

33 Beaver, *All Loves Excelling: American Protestant Women in World Mission*, p. 48.

This much support from the Board secured the opportunity to have an active religious life in the mission fields that these New England women were looking for in the United States. Heather J. Sharkey considers the relationship between American missionary women and the indigenous women in Ottoman lands “a story of reciprocal impact”.³⁴ According to Sharkey, “by providing American women with the option of careers outside the home, the mission stations [especially] of the Ottoman Empire became sites for the liberation of American women”.³⁵ Reciprocally, Sharkey claims, American missionary women provided Ottoman women with educational and medical facilities, which had not yet been established by the government.

Assigned missionaries sent back reports from the mission fields, and praised the activities of missionary wives either inside the home of the missionary or in the mission fields. In most of the reports sent to the United States, missionary wives were depicted as important figures in reaching the secluded areas of native women, who could thus be evangelized with their help. In the meantime the presence of a wife in the missionary’s home also encouraged the assigned missionary to be more productive and lively in his evangelical work. Both analyses concluded in one single point: New England women accelerated the evangelical activities, and raised the number of conversions in the mission fields. Consequently, they felt that they had achieved a position of being active publicly by working for the salvation of their non-Christian or non-Protestant sisters. They were “the itinerant preachers who spoke until midnight and felt themselves necessary and important”.³⁶

Though the American Board supported missionary matrimony for domestic reasons at first and though civil service of female missionaries mostly consisted of domestic and religious instruction for native women, American females appeared on the same stage with males. As they became active participants in this evangelical work, American female missionaries did not wait long to attract more pious women to this work. Mrs. Shuck noted female missionaries’ works in China in her letter to her friend in America, dated 1839.

Female missionaries are always welcomed, with much politeness, to the rooms of the neglected and degraded women of China. We can distribute books, and talk to the people about religion, whenever we wish; and what

34 Sharkey, Heather J., *American Missionaries in Ottoman Lands: Foundational Encounters* (2010), p. 3. Retrieved from http://repository.upenn.edu/nelc_papers/19.

35 Sharkey, *American Missionaries in Ottoman Lands: Foundational Encounters*, p. 8.

36 Welter, Barbara, “She hath done what she could: Protestant women’s missionary careers in nineteenth-century America”, *American Quarterly*, 30/5 (1978), 624–39, here p. 638.

more need we now desire than men and women, whose hearts are glowing with love to the Saviour, and to the souls of their fellow-men, to assist us in this glorious, this delightful work?³⁷

While assistance and devotion of more missionary females was encouraged by the missionary wives, the characteristics of the foreign mission work were not undervalued. American women interested in evangelical work in non-Christian lands were expected to be devoted to religious fervour. Self-denial and self sacrifice were prerequisite characteristics of a female missionary candidate, who would be active in both domestic and public spheres in mission fields. Mrs. Sarah L. Huntington Smith of the Syria mission explained the perfect image of a missionary woman to American women in the homeland, in a letter to the Board, dated 1836.

To you my dear sisters, I would say, Avoid all romantic notions in reference to this subject, and all undue excitement... Strength of character, discipline of mind, steadiness of faith, patience, perseverance, and self-denial are the requisite qualifications. I need not remind you that ardent piety lies at the foundation of the whole... Ere I left my father's house, I was convinced of the truth, and am now confirmed in it, that within the walls of her own dwelling, a young lady may cultivate and exhibit all the qualifications of a devoted missionary.³⁸

Considering "piety" as the most important qualification, Mrs. Smith continued with "habitual self-control". Female missionary candidates had to be patient, quiet, docile and humble. Describing Syria as a place "where everything is crooked and wrong; where ignorance, stupidity, insolence, and deceit, provoke the corresponding emotions of pride, impatience, contempt, imperiousness, and dislike", Mrs. Smith advised women to develop their virtue of self-control and to forget themselves.³⁹ Mrs. Smith pointed out that all this sacrifice, not surprisingly, was to be equipped for the sake of active usefulness in Syria.

37 Jeter, *Memoir of Mrs. Henrietta Shuck: The First American Female Missionary to China*, p. 142.

38 Hooker, Edward W., *Memoir of Mrs. Sarah L. Huntington Smith, Late of the American Mission in Syria* (New York: American Tract Society, 1845), p. 308.

39 Hooker, *Memoir of Mrs. Sarah L. Huntington Smith, Late of the American Mission in Syria*, p. 308.

The Motivating Idea: The Image of the “Heathen People”

The motivation driving millions of New England women to evangelical work could be described as “an internalized commission to spread the gospel; an altruistic desire to serve the less fortunate; and a practical response to a perceived need for the spread of civilization”.⁴⁰ All these three principles were embraced by the Puritan ideology. Foreign mission endeavour was thought “to enable New England women to reaffirm the Puritan principles”, and ultimately this fact made the cause attractive and suitable among these women.⁴¹ Since virtue and religion were assigned to these women by New England society, they believed in their hearts that they could succeed in evangelical work just by embracing these principles.

This Puritan ideology was nurtured by the women’s education of the nineteenth century, which helped American women to widen their perspective and to embrace a global sense of womanhood with a spiritual meaning. In a sense, educated New England women became aware of the social and cultural conditions, in which women of other religions were living. The picture of women belonging to other religions was reflected negatively in the writings of missionaries all over the world. Chinese foot-binding, polygamy of Indian rajahs, Indian zenanas and Ottoman harems were dominant tropes both in describing the “darkness” of other countries, and in shaping the idea that New England women possessed a “privileged life” stemming from being Protestant.⁴² Living under the bondage of patriarchy, the women of ‘heathen lands’ lacked education, freedom, and liberty. Urged on by the descriptions of these “miserable” women, New England women were determined to spread both civilization and the Gospel to these non-Christian lands. They firmly believed they could save their sisters, who they believed were “accustomed from childhood to hear them spoken of as stupid and without understanding; with neither intellect nor souls”.⁴³ New England women’s empathy with these women was fed by such stereotypical ‘Oriental’ women figures. Not surprisingly, helping these women through evangelization came to be considered as a “place of honor

40 Wilser, “Living Sacrifices: Women Missionaries’ Personal Writings 1812–1860”, p. 57.

41 Porterfield, Amanda, *Mary Lyon and the Mount Holyoke Missionaries* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 5.

42 Wilser, “Living Sacrifices: Women Missionaries’ Personal Writings 1812–1860”, p. 62.

43 Darley, Mary E., “The light of the morning”, in Byrne, Lavinia, *The Hidden Journey: Missionary Heroines in Many Lands* (Great Britain: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1993), p. 100.

and usefulness beyond that available to them within the confines of American society".⁴⁴

The development of this social responsibility among New England women stemmed from the very early missionary activities and reports of male missionaries in the mission fields. For instance, when the expedition tour was held in the Ottoman empire in 1820, the Editorial Secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, William E. Strong, stated that, according to American Board missionaries Eli Smith and Harrison Dwight's reports, there was no school existing in the region for the education of girls. In his reports sent to the Board, Strong described Ottoman women of all races and religions as females "in hard and degrading positions; beasts of burden in the fields, drudges in the house, or idle prisoners in the harem".⁴⁵

According to mission historian Lisa Joy Pruitt, the "Orient" for nineteenth-century evangelicals was "the area of the world stretching from historical Palestine to China and a wide variety of religious cultures, including Judaism, Islam, Greek and Syrian Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism".⁴⁶ The people living in the Orient were portrayed by American evangelicals of the nineteenth century as "effeminate men, oppressed women and children, who were either wildly undisciplined and overindulged or exploited and neglected".⁴⁷ In this context New England women felt responsible for the evangelization of these 'Oriental' women, and their contribution to the foreign mission movement accelerated as the image of the oppressed 'Oriental' women spread among evangelical women in New England churches. In the larger picture, New England women concluded that through mission femininity, "evangelizing the women of the Orient would completely renovate those societies, releasing the women from cultural bondage while simultaneously bringing eternal salvation to all of the people".⁴⁸ For these women, the picture of the 'Oriental' women as kept in cultural bondage, and as being afflicted, oppressed and miserable became an influential reference point in acknowledging their

44 Darley, "The light of the morning", p. 64.

45 Strong, William Ellsworth, *The Story of The American Board: An Account of the First Hundred Years of The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions* (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1910,) p. 221.

46 Pruitt, Lisa Joy, *A Looking-Glass for Ladies: American Protestant Women and the Orient in the Nineteenth Century* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2005), p. 3.

47 Pruitt, *A Looking-Glass for Ladies: American Protestant Women and the Orient in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 6.

48 Pruitt, *A Looking Glass for Ladies: American Protestant Women and the Orient in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 7.

self-image, which embraced a wide perspective of democracy, freedom and civilization.

Bringing the Gospel to a non-Christian or non-Protestant land was equal to enlightening and civilizing that country, according to New England women. Taking this approach, women's missionary rhetoric made missionary women's task heroic and indispensable. Grounded in American women's significant role as mothers infusing Christianity to their children, and as "guardians of the home and collectively of the nation", evangelizing the native women in 'heathen lands' was considered significant too.⁴⁹ Evangelizing the "mother" meant accomplishment in the evangelization of the children, who would be the following generation of the nation. In short, in foreign mission rhetoric, this meant success in general. The nurturing, caring, pious and religious mother role was infused to Ottoman mothers by American missionaries. In this sense, as Noriko Kawamura Ishii asserted, the concept of "commonness" was built. The idea of sisterhood brought native and missionary women together, though missionary women depicted themselves as superior to native women because of their Christian roots. The bond of sisterhood was stronger, though, between Armenian women and American women. There was a strong implication of sisterhood; American women as "daughters of covenant" referred to their sisters – that is to say Armenians and other women practicing ethnic religions in the land of Islam- as "daughters of sorrow" and their ultimate mission was to save them.⁵⁰

The stimulating thought of "being useful" was also nurtured by this Oriental picture, since New England women felt that their contributions and sacrifice were really needed in the Orient for the salvation of these Oriental women. This picture of Oriental women encouraged New England women to consider their own status in their own society too. They considered themselves to be in a senior position over the women of the Orient, and this comparison became a significant stimulant for them to give their lives more devotedly for the missionary work. According to Pruitt, the power of the image of the Oriental women among New England women was the turning point in women's involvement in the foreign mission movement, and in shaping their self-perceptions.

Similar to Pruitt, Joan Brumberg indicates that it is important to consider "both how and what American women came to think about themselves

49 Bendroth, "The Social Dimensions of Woman's Sphere: The Rise of Women's Organizations in Late Nineteenth-Century American Protestantism", p. 110.

50 Başcı, K. Pelin, "Shadows in the missionary garden of roses: women of Turkey in American Missionary Texts", in *Deconstructing Images of the Turkish Woman*, ed. Zehra F. Arat (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), p. 107.

in relation to other women of the world” to understand these women’s involvement in the foreign mission movement.⁵¹ Ethnological descriptions of manners, family life, politics and culture created the basis in distinguishing Christians from non-Christians. Specifically after the 1870s, the religious ethnology embraced by American women implied that the research on non-Christian cultures or ‘oriental’ cultures in general gained the attention and support of American women. The exotic characteristics of oriental cultures became the core elements of American women’s interest.⁵² According to Brumberg, “the popular dissemination of this catalog of heathen atrocities” became New England women’s foreign mission crusade, which was “a powerful and multifaceted sisterhood of agencies”.⁵³

In this framework, the “otherness” of the native women played the most significant role in New England women’s involvement in foreign mission work. By comparing themselves with the non-Christian or non-Protestant lands’ women, New England women identified their self-image. They understood that native women were in miserable conditions all over the world, and that New England women were among the luckiest groups since they saw themselves within the liberty of Christianity. As Barbara Welter notes, “Christianity was characterized as the liberator of the women”.⁵⁴ Consequently, Christianity became the tool of liberation, and through the mission work, New England women devoted themselves to the spreading of this liberation throughout the world.

Seraphina Haynes Everett: The Duties of a Missionary Wife and the Mid-Nineteenth Century Ottoman Empire Through Her Eyes

The daughter of an officer in the Congregational Church of Southbridge, Massachusetts, Seraphina was born in 1823 into a large family. She was the seventh child of 15. Her father was proud of her interest in study, which arose quite

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- 51 Brumberg, Joan Jacobs, “Zenanas and girlless villages: the ethnology of American evangelical women, 1870–1910”, *The Journal of American History*, 69/ 2 (1982), 347–71, here p. 348.
 - 52 Brumberg, “Zenanas and girlless villages: the ethnology of American evangelical women, 1870–1910”, p. 349.
 - 53 Brumberg, “Zenanas and girlless villages: the ethnology of American evangelical women, 1870–1910”, p. 350.
 - 54 Welter, “Cult of true womanhood, 1820–1860”, p. 198.

early during her childhood – she could spell words “of two syllables before she was three years old”, and she could “recite geography at four”.⁵⁵

In 1838, at the age of 15, while she was attending school in Southbridge, Seraphina met a special religious group through her sister Mary Haynes. This local group of Southbridge committed themselves to meet the love of the Redeemer. The Second Great Awakening resulted in numerous similar events especially in the towns and cities of the New England between 1790 and 1840. After this meeting, Seraphina felt delighted about her “becoming reconciled to God”.⁵⁶ At the age of 15, she experienced the Christian conversion, as she called it, and in the future she would lead her life strictly according to this experience.

Seraphina started her higher education, after the local school in Southbridge, in the Female Seminary in Andover, in 1842. This seminary had a serious effect on both her future plans, and on her ideas regarding the evangelization of all non-Protestant people. The Seminary in Andover was the place where the evangelical work in foreign missions was triggered. A.B.C.F.M. was in fact established by the Congregationalist members of this seminary.

It was in 1843 when Seraphina mentioned Mr. Everett, her future husband, for the first time in a letter to her family. He was a “dear, good teacher” of hers in the Seminary.⁵⁷ In the same letter she also highlighted the fact that Mr. Everett was going to go to Persia as a missionary soon. In the spring of this same year, not very surprisingly, Mr. Everett proposed to her, and Seraphina's career as a missionary wife started when she accepted.

Upon the marriage proposal Seraphina received from a future missionary, it became inevitable that she would join the evangelical cause of her husband. Mr. Everett had already voluntarily applied to A.B.C.F.M. to be assigned as a missionary to any “heathen corner” in the world. In a letter to her family, dated 28 January 1844, Seraphina explained about the indefiniteness of the mission field that the Everetts would be assigned to. She stated that

Mr. Everett went to Boston yesterday, expecting to return tomorrow. Then, it is probable, the portion of the Lord's vineyard in which we are destined to labor will be assigned; that dark corner of the earth where we

55 Benjamin, *The Missionary Sisters: A Memorial of Mrs. Seraphina Haynes Everett, and Mrs. Harriet Martha Hamlin*, p. 12.

56 Benjamin, *The Missionary Sisters: A Memorial of Mrs. Seraphina Haynes Everett, and Mrs. Harriet Martha Hamlin*, p. 13.

57 Benjamin, *The Missionary Sisters: A Memorial of Mrs. Seraphina Haynes Everett, and Mrs. Harriet Martha Hamlin*, p. 18.

may be the humble instruments of scattering light and knowledge will be pointed out.

On 9 November 1844, Seraphina wrote to her family in order to inform them that the Everetts were going to leave the United States on 20 February 1845 as an assigned A.B.C.F.M. missionary family for the Armenian mission in Western Asia. Upon this decision of the Board, the pre-embarkation marriage of Seraphina Haynes and Joel Sumner Everett took place on 12 February 1845, only eight days before they were supposed to leave their home country as a family.

The Everetts' voyage took nearly two months to reach İzmir. Seraphina wrote to her family constantly, telling them how excited she was about serving the Lord in the "dark sides" of Western Asia. On 17 April 1845 she saw İzmir from the deck of the ship, and described it in a letter to her family.

This morning we found ourselves slowly proceeding up the Gulf of Smyrna [İzmir], land, upon each side, appearing at a very short distance from us. Olive and cypress trees cover some of the hills, others are rocky and barren, and upon the sides of others still, and here and there all along the shore, are spots of the most delightful verdure... What my feelings are I can hardly tell you, only that there is a mingling of joy and sadness, of hope and trembling.⁵⁸

The Everett's first description of Ottoman people clearly exemplified the nineteenth-century American missionary societies' understanding of 'the Orient'. In April 1845, upon their arrival at İzmir, the Everetts drove directly to Bornova (Bournabat), a village eight miles away from İzmir, where most of the A.B.C.F.M. missionaries had settled down. Seraphina's description of both this short trip to Bornova and the native population she saw for the first time during their travel indicates that from the very beginning she had been very much aware of what kind of a scene she was going to see in İzmir. Her analysis of the population dated 19 April 1845 illustrates her knowledge of the ethnicities of the region, and the stereotypes missionary rhetoric made popular in their reports to the Board.

The road to this village is delightful, passing through groves of olive and fig. These and the vineyards, the orange-trees covered with fruit and flowers, the burying-grounds, with their tall, dark cypresses, all remind me

58 Benjamin, *The Missionary Sisters: A Memorial of Mrs. Seraphina Haynes Everett, and Mrs. Harriet Martha Hamlin*, p. 51.

that I am in a strange land; but more than all, the thronging multitudes of bearded and turbaned Turks, Armenians and Jews, who crowd the narrow streets, many of them scarcely wide enough for the three persons to walk or ride abreast, and the unknown tongues which salute my ear on every side, tell me that I am in a land of darkness and ignorance, and not in my own happy country.⁵⁹

Learning the local language of the targeted mission field was the most prominent duty A.B.C.F.M. requested its missionaries to fulfill. Settled in Bornova, the Everetts started immediately learning the language, Armenian. The daily private lessons from a local Armenian were intense and very productive; at the end of the fourth day Seraphina had learned the alphabet. She knew the significance of the language in reaching her local female sisters and their children, who would build up the Protestant society of the future. She understood the significance of the language much better when she visited an Armenian church, where “a congregation of Armenian females”⁶⁰ gathered to worship. She described her feelings upon participating at the service:

At this time a large number of candles, arranged in a row behind the altar, were lighted. Oh, how spiritually dark! – and the light of the candles seemed only to render the darkness more awfully visible...Our hearts were pierced, and we turned away, praying that this darkness might soon be dispelled.⁶¹

On 26 April 1845, the Everetts left İzmir on a steamer for Istanbul to attend their first missionary meeting regarding the Armenian mission in Western Asia. The notes Seraphina took during this journey, dated 29 April, can be taken as her first analysis and impressions of other religions practiced in Ottoman empire. She described the people she encountered on the steamer from İzmir to Istanbul to her family thus:

There were persons from no less than twelve different nations, with their characteristic languages, customs, and religions, if such their

59 Benjamin, *The Missionary Sisters: A Memorial of Mrs. Seraphina Haynes Everett, and Mrs. Harriet Martha Hamlin*, p. 52.

60 Benjamin, *The Missionary Sisters: A Memorial of Mrs. Seraphina Haynes Everett, and Mrs. Harriet Martha Hamlin*, p. 53.

61 Benjamin, *The Missionary Sisters: A Memorial of Mrs. Seraphina Haynes Everett, and Mrs. Harriet Martha Hamlin*, p. 54.

superstitious faith and worship could be called. It was a painful sight – the Jesuit priests with their strings of beads, and the Mussulman repeating what are to him unmeaning words, and prostrating himself five times a day toward the tomb of the false prophet.⁶²

With this trip to Istanbul, Seraphina witnessed the multicultural Ottoman empire more profoundly, and comprehended how demanding the work was which American missionaries, male or female, were willing to commit themselves to. In a letter, dated 22 May 1845, Seraphina, suffused with sentimental thoughts and with an intense longing to see her father and mother, Seraphina questioned her usefulness both to her Armenian sisters she had met in Ottoman lands and to her husband. From this short passage, it is clear just to what extent Seraphina embraced the reasons for the Board's in incorporating missionary wives into the foreign mission causes.

I have cause each day and hour to call upon my soul and all within me, to bless the Lord for calling me, so insignificant, so weak, to engage in such a glorious work as this among the Armenians, and for the prospect of usefulness my dear husband has among them. It is through him that I expect to do any work in this field; would that I were more worthy to be a helpmeet to one of God's servants in his arduous labors! May the grace of God enable me to cheer him on his way, make happy his home, and by my prayers and feeble efforts, aid his usefulness!⁶³

In the summer of 1845, the Everetts dedicated themselves to learning Armenian in order to communicate with Armenian families of İzmir. They “read and translate a chapter in the Testament each day, attend to the grammar with Mr. Riggs, and are about to commence reading either Pilgrim's Progress or Robinson Crusoe, in Armenian”.⁶⁴ In her letter, dated 19 June 1845, Mrs. Everett talked about their perseverance in learning Armenian:

We write with the Armenian character every day, and are continually using words and phrases... I pray that our zeal may not abate, but

62 Benjamin, *The Missionary Sisters: A Memorial of Mrs. Seraphina Haynes Everett, and Mrs. Harriet Martha Hamlin*, p. 56.

63 Benjamin, *The Missionary Sisters: A Memorial of Mrs. Seraphina Haynes Everett, and Mrs. Harriet Martha Hamlin*, p. 61.

64 Benjamin, *The Missionary Sisters: A Memorial of Mrs. Seraphina Haynes Everett, and Mrs. Harriet Martha Hamlin*, p. 66.

continually increase, until we can speak the words of eternal life to the multitudes perishing around us.⁶⁵

Soon “the words of eternal life” reached some Armenian women and children in Bornova. İzmir experienced a large fire, which destroyed many neighbourhoods, including the Armenian ones in the summer of 1845. American missionaries’ houses at Bornova became a gathering place for most Armenian families, who lost both their houses and all their belongings to the fire. In July, as Seraphina told in a letter to her family, an Armenian mother came to see her and begged her to teach her son the Armenian alphabet. Seraphina accepted this wish whole-heartedly, and from that moment on A, B, C of the alphabet became the major utensil in reaching “the multitudes perishing around”.

I cannot, of course, talk much to him, but I hope in this way to learn to speak some, and also to do the little fellow some good. I might have had two little girls to teach also, if I had known enough of this language, which I hope soon to be able to use a little.⁶⁶

In her letters, besides her studies with Armenian children, the conditions of the pitiful Armenian families aggrieved by the fire, and the beautiful scenes she had witnessed around İzmir, Seraphina also talked about her insights into Islam and “Mohammedans”. In a letter dated 9 September 1845, Seraphina described what Ramazan, which fell in September that year, meant both for Muslims and for her:

This month the Mohammedans have their fast Ramazan. They neither eat nor drink, nor smoke, from sunrise until sunset. The days at this season, you know, are long, and for those of the Turks who labor hard it is rather a severe penance, and their tempers sometimes become so soured before the signal of the close of the day, that it is almost dangerous to have anything to do with them in the latter part of the day. One might be inclined to think, from this fasting, that the Turks are very pious; but what are their notions in so doing? The Koran commands it, their laws enforce it, and they dare not do otherwise. Poor, ignorant, deluded Turks! They

65 Benjamin, *The Missionary Sisters: A Memorial of Mrs. Seraphina Haynes Everett, and Mrs. Harriet Martha Hamlin*, p. 66.

66 Benjamin, *The Missionary Sisters: A Memorial of Mrs. Seraphina Haynes Everett, and Mrs. Harriet Martha Hamlin*, p. 68.

dare lie, and steal, and murder. How fatally they are bound in the chains of error, bigotry, and sin!⁶⁷

The stereotypical “Turk” description of Seraphina continued at length in the latter parts of the same letter:

The dress and general appearance of the Turks are such as would lead one to suppose they possessed much gravity and sobriety, and dignity. Their heavy turban (veil,) long beard, and slow, dignified step, all give this impression. But so many things I have heard, things continually taking place, which show what great and glaring guilt they can incur, that I fear almost the sight of them.⁶⁸

Islam and “Mohammedans” were not the only subjects of Seraphina’s insights into religion. On 26 September 1845, she wrote about the Feast of the Cross, which the Greek Orthodox Church was celebrating. Her detailed description of the occasion became her tool in stating the usefulness of her presence in this “heathen” country.

This is a great religious holiday with the Greeks. It comes on Friday, so it is both fast and feast, – how inconsistent! Everybody in the streets, or throwing the doors and windows of the houses, dressed in their richest and gayest attire! Such a noise! This is the Feast of the Cross. A multitude of people assemble near the seaside, at some appointed place, to witness the baptism of the Cross... the priest stands near the shore with the cross in his hand, and arranged near him are some half dozen nearly naked men: the cross is thrown at some distance into the sea, and these practiced men dive for it, and honored, rewarded, and happy is he who bears out the baptized cross. Sometimes persons are drowned in this heathenish ceremony. This is religion! And the Greeks wonder why missionaries come to labor among them? ‘Why not go’ they say, ‘to the heathen?’⁶⁹

According to Seraphina, the “Oriental” was “the heathen” personified. The image of the Oriental shaped and shared by the New England missionaries,

67 Benjamin, *The Missionary Sisters: A Memorial of Mrs. Seraphina Haynes Everett, and Mrs. Harriet Martha Hamlin*, p. 69.

68 Benjamin, *The Missionary Sisters: A Memorial of Mrs. Seraphina Haynes Everett, and Mrs. Harriet Martha Hamlin*, p. 69.

69 Benjamin, *The Missionary Sisters: A Memorial of Mrs. Seraphina Haynes Everett, and Mrs. Harriet Martha Hamlin*, p. 70.

constituted the foundation of the idea which motivated their missions. And, according to Seraphina, in order to succeed in converting these “Orientals” to evangelical Protestant Christianity, a missionary, male or female, should “be sedate and discreet”, as she herself was, should sustain “cheerfulness and sprightliness of feeling, which I think are necessary in a country like this, where everything has a downward tendency upon the character and feelings,” and should have the “vivacity of disposition”.⁷⁰ Seraphina argued that combined with these characteristics there should of course be a passionate and enthusiastic belonging to Evangelical Protestantism’s principles. Only with this strong character, and with an inexhaustible drive to fulfill the requirements of the evangelical mission, could a missionary hope to bring the Gospel to the “worldly, wicked city” of İzmir.⁷¹

As Ellen L. Fleischmann argues, missionaries in the Middle Eastern mission stations “produced a rich and prolific body of writings”, which provide “data on social and economic conditions that are often undocumented elsewhere”.⁷² However, while these writings give a picture the social and cultural context of the mission fields, they also “tell a story all their own, revealing more about the author’s mentality than the subject’s objective circumstances, status and attitudes. Fleischmann’s argument is well grounded in American missionary women’s perception of the Ottoman women in general, and in Seraphina’s perception of Armenian women in Ottoman mission land in particular. In their first year of evangelical missions, the Everetts stayed in İzmir. They learned Armenian, and worked relentlessly among the Armenians there. While Mr. Everett was working among the Armenian males, Seraphina made home-visits to Armenian families, informing them about the gospel preaching which was held regularly, offering to teach Armenian to women and children, and holding Armenian female prayer meetings. Compared to the improvements A.B.C.F.M. missionaries achieved among Armenians in Istanbul, Seraphina found İzmir very poor and “fruitless”.⁷³ According to her, God was also punishing these heathens of İzmir by confronting them with constant disastrous earthquakes. During the times of calamity the Everetts, like all other A.B.C.F.M. missionaries

70 Benjamin, *The Missionary Sisters: A Memorial of Mrs. Seraphina Haynes Everett, and Mrs. Harriet Martha Hamlin*, p. 71.

71 Benjamin, *The Missionary Sisters: A Memorial of Mrs. Seraphina Haynes Everett, and Mrs. Harriet Martha Hamlin*, p. 71.

72 Fleischmann, Ellen L., “Our Moslem sisters: women of Greater Syria in the eyes of American Protestant missionary women”, *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 9/3 (1998), 307–23, here p. 307.

73 Benjamin, *The Missionary Sisters: A Memorial of Mrs. Seraphina Haynes Everett, and Mrs. Harriet Martha Hamlin*, p. 71.

helped these, in their terms, “religiously” and “spiritually” “lost” people of İzmir, and invited them to turn to God.

During their second year in Ottoman empire, in May 1846, the Everetts were invited to join Istanbul mission field for a limited period. Since Miss Harriet Martha Lovell, a missionary teacher in the Armenian Female Seminary in Istanbul, which was established in November 1845, was sick, Seraphina was asked to take her place at the school. Reverend William Goodell, who had arrived at Istanbul in 1831 to commence the Armenian mission in the Ottoman empire, and was coordinating this mission at that moment, gave an account of Seraphina's joining their mission:

That was a bright day to us and to this mission, when she came to Constantinople [Istanbul]. She brought with her all the vigor and freshness of youth, all the charms of a kind and benevolent heart, and all the fascinations of a cultivated intellect and cultivated manners, united with great buoyancy of spirit, and an unusual degree of liveliness and loveliness.⁷⁴

The Armenian Female Seminary in Istanbul, in Barbara J. Merguerian's words, was “the modest seminary,” which “established a model for similar schools throughout the Ottoman Empire”.⁷⁵ A.B.C.F.M. missionary Henry J. Van Lennep and his wife Mary E. Van Lennep, stationed at İzmir, were commissioned to establish a female school for Armenians in Istanbul by early 1844. As the wife of an assigned missionary Mary E. Van Lennep's contribution would be essential in the proposed seminary. Mary wrote to her mother about the main role she and her missionary husband would play among the Armenian women of Istanbul in a letter dated 15 February 1844: “What they want is the influence of a Christian family to be exerted over those who are to become the wives and mothers of the Armenian nation. What a field! How interesting! How responsible!”⁷⁶ And, according to Mary, “to train the future wives and mothers of the Armenian nation” would be “an interesting field”.⁷⁷ As her husband Henry would be handling the preaching duties, Mary with a few other missionary

74 Benjamin, *The Missionary Sisters: A Memorial of Mrs. Seraphina Haynes Everett, and Mrs. Harriet Martha Hamlin*, p. 297.

75 Merguerian, Barbara J., “The beginnings of secondary education for Armenian women: the Armenian Female Seminary in Constantinople”, *Journal of Society for Armenian Studies*, 5 (1990–1991), p. 121.

76 Hawes, Louisa Fisher, *Memoir of Mrs. Mary E. Van Lennep* (Hartford: Belknap and Hamersley, 1847), p. 258.

77 Hawes, *Memoir of Mrs. Mary E. Van Lennep*, p. 266.

wives and assigned female teachers would, in her own words “open the way for a more extended enlightenment of the females”, since she claimed that “the Armenian gentlemen feel that a thorough reformation cannot take place in their nation, until those who will be the wives and mothers, shall come under Christian influence, and they take a deep interest in this enterprise”.⁷⁸

Mary Van Lennep died of typhus on 27 September 1844, in Istanbul, and the Armenian Female Seminary’s opening was delayed due to her sudden death.⁷⁹ Harriet Martha Lovell, who crossed the Atlantic on the same ship as the Everetts, was appointed as a teacher at the proposed female seminary, which was opened under the administration of the missionary family of William Goodell and his wife, early missionaries to the Ottoman mission, in October 1845. Martha wrote to Seraphina, on 27 October, sitting in her “school-room surrounded by seven Armenian girls”, “would that you were here, dearest sister, to assist me with your counsels, to cheer me with your smiles, and join your prayers with mine, for that divine direction without which I shall be utterly unable to do aught aright!”⁸⁰ And, not much later, the Everetts started their new duty at the Armenian Female Seminary in Istanbul.

By August 1846, relying on the essential work of Seraphina at the Armenian Female Seminary, the Board decided to change the Everetts’ mission field, and assigned them to the Istanbul mission field. Witnessing the attendance of Armenian families at Gospel preaching, Seraphina was content with the decision of the Board. Besides teaching Armenian girls at the Seminary, Seraphina continued holding female prayer meetings at the houses of Armenians, during which she witnessed what she described as the Armenian women’s hunger for knowledge. By October 1846, the Armenian Female Seminary, which Seraphina referred to as “our female seminary”, was “outwardly in a prosperous condition. The first year, which commenced with three or four pupils, is about closing with fourteen, and others are waiting to join”.⁸¹ Seraphina’s responsibility at the seminary increased in 1851, when the Goodells decided to leave the mission field to return to the United States.⁸² The Everetts took the vocation of supervision, and Seraphina besides lecturing at the seminary, became responsible

78 Hawes, *Memoir of Mrs. Mary E. Van Lennep*, p. 273.

79 Merguerian, “The beginnings of secondary education for Armenian women: the Armenian Female Seminary in Constantinople”, p. 108.

80 Benjamin, *The Missionary Sisters: A Memorial of Mrs. Seraphina Haynes Everett, and Mrs. Harriet Martha Hamlin*, p. 98.

81 Benjamin, *The Missionary Sisters: A Memorial of Mrs. Seraphina Haynes Everett, and Mrs. Harriet Martha Hamlin*, p. 138.

82 Benjamin, *The Missionary Sisters: A Memorial of Mrs. Seraphina Haynes Everett, and Mrs. Harriet Martha Hamlin*, p. 221.

for the “general housekeeping supervision, including feeding and clothing the girls”.⁸³

For eight years, until her death of typhus in 27 December 1854, Seraphina worked constantly in “our female seminary” among the Armenians in Istanbul. She was regarded one of the noteworthy founders and an influential scholar of the Armenian Female Seminary in Istanbul, which was “far, far beyond our expectations”.⁸⁴ Seraphina also witnessed a distinguished development in the evangelization of Armenians in the Ottoman empire in July 1846 with the establishment of the first Evangelical Church of the Armenians of Turkey “of forty members, taking the New Testament as the groundwork of their faith, built on Jesus Christ as the chief corner-stone, and arising out of the corrupt, yes, long dead mass which has for so many centuries rested on the face of this whole country”,⁸⁵ as well as, in January 1848, the Ottoman sultan’s issuing the proclamation “in which Protestant Armenians are recognized as a distinct sect, under the name of Protestants”.⁸⁶ The Armenian Female Seminary grew in size with the increasing number of members of the Evangelical Church of Armenians of Turkey, and according to Seraphina, “school is going on very pleasantly, we are not without encouragement... and it is a pleasure to labor for these dear girls, though an arduous and responsible work”.⁸⁷ In one of her last letters to her cousin Mrs. Clark in the United States, Seraphina summarized her feelings regarding the holy vocation for which she had taken the responsibility:

Strength, health, in an unusual measure have been given me, and precious opportunities to labor in our Master’s vineyard, and I would call upon my soul and all that is within me to praise the Lord... The good work in this village has progressed much in the last year, but our desires are by no means filled. Lord, increase our faith!⁸⁸

83 Merguerian, “The beginnings of secondary education for Armenian women: the Armenian Female Seminary in Constantinople”, p. 114.

84 Benjamin, *The Missionary Sisters: A Memorial of Mrs. Seraphina Haynes Everett, and Mrs. Harriet Martha Hamlin*, p. 151.

85 Benjamin, *The Missionary Sisters: A Memorial of Mrs. Seraphina Haynes Everett, and Mrs. Harriet Martha Hamlin*, p. 128.

86 Benjamin, *The Missionary Sisters: A Memorial of Mrs. Seraphina Haynes Everett, and Mrs. Harriet Martha Hamlin*, p. 175.

87 Benjamin, *The Missionary Sisters: A Memorial of Mrs. Seraphina Haynes Everett, and Mrs. Harriet Martha Hamlin*, p. 235.

88 Benjamin, *The Missionary Sisters: A Memorial of Mrs. Seraphina Haynes Everett, and Mrs. Harriet Martha Hamlin*, p. 279.

Seraphina Haynes Everett was responsible for the boarding at the Armenian Female Seminary “of between thirty and forty scholars”.⁸⁹ She learned both Armenian and Greek, “which she had taken pains to acquire”, so that she could teach “several branches of study” in these languages to Armenian and Greek girls.⁹⁰ Due to her intellect and religious fervour, she was regarded as indispensable to the enhancement of the Armenian Female Seminary in Istanbul.

Conclusion

In the nineteenth century, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions supported missionary matrimony on two grounds. First, the Board believed that missionaries coping with ‘uncivilized heathens’ in ‘Oriental lands’ needed peace, love, comfort and happiness in their domestic life while performing their vocational duties in order to enable them to perform them more efficiently. This could only be achieved with the help of educated and pious New England women. Second, the local women of the mission fields were unreachable by American missionary males. The missionary wives could have easy access to the generally secluded local women. As the Board’s assigned missionaries did, these New England wives learned the local languages, became acquainted with the local culture and norms, and analysed the role of local women by juxtaposing them with themselves. Consequently, missionary wives, or more appropriately female missionaries-teachers, succeeded in both evangelizing their ‘heathen’ sisters, and educating these women’s daughters in language, religion, needlework, mathematics, geography and history. Through the female praying sessions held regularly at the houses of local women, New England missionary wives spread the Gospel, and contributed to the success of the Board as local women converted to Evangelical Protestantism, and registered their children at the missionary schools and seminaries.

Seraphina Haynes Everett’s experiences as the wife of an assigned missionary in the Ottoman Mission Field exemplify the lives of such women. Upon the pre-embarkation marriage, Seraphina became involved in the vocation of the Evangelical Protestant missionary in Ottoman empire. While supporting her missionary husband by providing him with a home, wife and children, Seraphina learned about the social and cultural life in Ottoman empire, and

89 Benjamin, *The Missionary Sisters: A Memorial of Mrs. Seraphina Haynes Everett, and Mrs. Harriet Martha Hamlin*, p. 298.

90 Benjamin, *The Missionary Sisters: A Memorial of Mrs. Seraphina Haynes Everett, and Mrs. Harriet Martha Hamlin*, p. 298.

set out to analyse the Armenians of Ottoman empire. Interacting with their culture, lifestyle, social norms and their role in the family and in the society in general, Seraphina tried to conceptualize the contradistinction between educated and pious New England women carrying the Evangelical cause to far lands and the illiterate, uneducated “heathen” Armenian women living in seclusion, her “heathen sisters” whom she sought to enlighten through education and evangelization.